

**Baltimore City Sustainability Commission  
Water Working Group Meeting  
Tuesday, June 10, 2008, 6PM-8PM**

On Tuesday, June 10, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. the Baltimore City Sustainability Commission, Water Working Group meeting was held at Moffit and Nichol Consulting, Suite 240, 2700 Lighthouse Point Site 501, Baltimore, MD 21224.

The following members were in attendance:

Mary Washington	Baltimore City Sustainability Commission
John Ciekot	Baltimore City Sustainability Commission
Clark Howells	City of Baltimore, Reservoir Natural Resources Section
Marcus Asante	Recreational Boating
Dan Dillon	Baltimore Ecosystem Study
Sujay Kauchal	University of Maryland, Center for Environmental Science
Phil Lee	BHWA/ Development perspective
Laurie Schwartz	Waterfront Partnership
Bill Stack	City of Baltimore, Water Quality Management Section
Inez Robb	Watershed 263 Council

#### **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Mary Washington opened the meeting by welcoming the attendees and thanking them for their participation with the Baltimore Sustainability Commission, Water Working Group (WWG).

- The standing members of the committee are expected to attend at least 2 out of the 3 standing committee meetings and at least 2 out of the 3 Public Meeting/Listening Sessions.

The committee members introduced themselves, provided some background information, discussed their interest in the sustainability program, talked about their primary focus and interests in water related issues.

#### **OVERVIEW OF BALIMORE SUSTAINABILTIY COMMISSION**

Mary Washington provided a handout to the group which outlined the Baltimore Sustainability Program. The main function of which is to work with the Sustainability Commission to develop and implement the Sustainability Plan. For the Water Working Group

- Water will be viewed as not only a natural resource but also a public utility.
- The committee members will seek affordable cost effective means of dealing with impacts to the waters managed by Baltimore City.
- The plan developed by the WWG must be something which can be implemented, with goals and recommendations which are realistic.
- As a group we should try and identify someone who will be able to help with creative ways financing of the plan so that the recommendation coming out of the plan can be implemented.
- The main task of the group is to write this plan.
- Education of the public will be a key component of the plan.

- Attention should also be given to how Baltimore impacts the region water quality.

The WWG is working with a tight timeline. The Sustainability Plan is scheduled for completion in Early 2009. The deadline for the draft plan is Fall 2008.

## **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

The members entered into a general discussion of the focus of the WWG

- How wide should be our focus?

Bill Stack informed the group of a new watershed agreement signed in December 2006 between Baltimore City and Baltimore County. This regional watershed agreement created a new set of commitments in five topic areas: stormwater, community greening, development/redevelopment, public health, and trash. Bill felt that the agreement goals and action plan could plug right in to our efforts and be a good guide for modeling our efforts.

John Ciekot expressed his views on sustainability

- Sustainability is all encompassing.
- We are all a part of the environment.
- Human activity can threaten the earth's future.
- How do we sustain water resources into the future, for humans/other species?
- The focus of the discussion will range between narrow issues like trash in the harbor to much broader issues like the regional water quality.
- Ultimately the WWG plan should provide not only direction but language which can be used as a tool to guide management decisions.
- Protection of the resource is the responsibility of society.

Sujay Kauchal felt that the goal of the WWG plan should define the types of services we would like the ecosystem to provide and establish both short and long term goals.

- The water quality in the City-owned reservoirs is good but could be better.
- We should insure that we do not sacrifice quantity for quality particularly during drought.
- Design resilience into the system.

Bill Stack discussed the cooperative agreement between the Regional Technical Group and USGS to evaluate the water quality monitoring program for the reservoir watersheds.

- Many of the impacts to the water quality within the City drinking water reservoirs as well as the waters within Baltimore City originate in the surrounding counties. These watersheds strongly influence the water quality of Baltimore City's waters.
- There is no endless supply of water.

Inez Robb wanted the group to more clearly define what is meant by quality water.

- The quality of water is relative and based on its intended use.
- Focus should be on educating the citizenry about the watershed and about the effect that citizens have on water quality.
- Citizens should be educated about where their drinking water comes from and the quality of that drinking water.
- That other Sustainability Commission groups should make water quality apart of their discussions and look at how their topics (e.g. Green Infrastructure, Transportation) could affect water quality.

- How many groups are active within the various watersheds within Baltimore City and what are those groups doing? There need be lines of communication opened to encourage participation and to raise awareness about what is going on in these watersheds and the activities of the watershed associations.

Mary Washington stated that this process will not be business as usual.

- Inclusiveness is important in order to produce a better end product.
- All points of view will be considered.
- There will be a commitment to reach out to the community for input into the plan.
- One the goals of the WWG will be education and outreach.
- We should have a broad interpretation of who monitors water and that this should include citizens who live in these watersheds and witness the changes which occur in waters close to them.
- We should also consider the financial impact that water quality has on the City of Baltimore. The last thing that a visitor to the Harbor should remember is the trash in the water. Explore the economic implications of good vs. poor water quality.

Inez Robb felt that the key to the success of this process will be communication.

\* It was felt by the group that a representative from the business community should be invited to participate with the WWG.

Mary Washington was interested in researching who is active in the City watersheds.

- What are they doing?
- What restoration projects are planned? What is in place?
- What best management practices have been implemented?

Bill Stack stated that government can only do so much. We have plans which are designed to improve water quality in order to meet the necessary water quality standards but government can only do so much. We as government, have to rely on businesses and citizens to make up the difference and take an active role in improving their watersheds in order to improve the water quality of these systems.

Phil Lee felt that the watershed associations need to combine their efforts (e.g. work to address sewer overflows. As a result of this effort the City of Baltimore began to address issue.

Laurie Schwartz was interested having a better understanding of how to keep trash out of the harbor.

- To research the best methods used by other communities to protect their water resources from trash. In particular the redirection of outfalls by the City of Chicago.

Dan Dillon felt that education was the key in solving the trash issue and other municipalities were better at educating their citizenry than the City of Baltimore.

- The City of Baltimore is improving however and moving in that direction.
- In particular the creation of recycling programs in City schools

Bill Stack stated that the City is actively identifying hot spots for trash and in the process of developing a strategic plan for trash.

- The plan will include patterns in distribution and an approach to remediate for the problem areas.
- Currently some consideration is being given to the development of a Trash Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)
- Currently Los Angeles is the only City with a trash TMDL.

Phil Lee stated that currently there is an attempt to develop criteria within Maryland for a trash TMDL and that the effort is focused on the Anacostia River.

- There are no standards yet.

## **TIMELINE AND WORKING GROUP DELIVERABLES**

Mary Washington discussed criteria for decision making and suggested that WWG decisions be based on consensus “I can live with it”.

Laurie Schwartz suggested that if consensus could not be reached a 2/3 vote would decide the issue.

Mary Washington stated that she, John Ciekot, and Clark Howells would develop benchmarks to be met in order to insure that we meet the Fall deadline.

## **OVERVIEW OF BALTIMORE CITY/COUNTY WATER SYSTEM**

Clark Howells discussed City-owned reservoir system and forest buffer.

- The city owns three reservoirs which are used to supply the City of Baltimore and 5 surrounding counties (Baltimore, Carroll, Anne Arundel, Harford, and Howard) with drinking water.
- Serving 1.8M people
- Manages 17,580 acres for forest which buffer the reservoirs.
- Supplements supply with water drawn from the Susquehanna River. Primarily during drought.
- Highlighted the disconnect between the citizens of Baltimore and the water supply.
- Stressed the importance of the system to the citizens of Baltimore and region as a whole.

Bill Stack stated that we do not have adequate protection for this reservoir system.

- That the water quality of these reservoirs is threatened by land use issues within the watersheds which are not owned by the City of Baltimore.
- These watersheds are managed by other municipalities (Baltimore and Carroll Counties) and that we have only voluntary agreements in place to guide development.

Sujay Kauchal stated that the agreements need to be mandatory.

- Development takes place in areas without infrastructure which is contributing to the pollutant load.
- 100% of nitrate comes from septic systems in some areas.
- This results in greater impact to Chesapeake Bay.

Bill Stack felt that regulation can help with development issues but rezoning takes place on a 5 year cycle. This allows for an opportunity to rezone and open areas for development every 5 years.

- Political will is needed to deny rezoning requests and that politicians are under a lot of pressure many times to grant these requests.
- The citizens of Baltimore could help protect our water resource if they were educated about the issue and became advocates for watershed protection.

Sujay Kauchal pointed out that we should not forget that climate change is also an issue which cannot be ignored. The effects of development will be compounded by climate change in future.

- Water is a resource that we cannot live without.

## **LOGISTICS**

Public meeting should educate citizens about these issues as well as solicit input. Citizens must be educated before they can comment effectively about these issues.

- Should build on previous discussions.

Inez Robb states that the presentation should help the citizens visualize the watersheds and the drinking water reservoirs and then focus down to their local watersheds.

- This will raise awareness about where our drinking water comes from and provide a sense of ownership to the citizens.

Mary Washington stated that it would be useful for committee members to participate in the presentation.

- That it should be a joint effort.
- View the reservoirs and other waters within Baltimore City as a natural resources and a public utility.

Bill Stack felt is it important to make a clear distinction between the Reservoir Watersheds and the City watersheds so that citizens are not confused during the discussion.

- Stress that we as Baltimore City cannot control the water quality coming from the County owned watersheds.

John Ciekot stated that educating the public will extend beyond this effort.

- Understanding is needed for citizens to develop a sense of stewardship in order to facilitate sustainability.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Marcus Asante – It is important how the story is told. It is a story to tell. Citizens will listen to neighbors not necessarily a commission. Tell the story.

John Ciekot – Trash is a way to tell the story. Water cycles influence our lives. Only the public can solve the problem. Educational recommendation, make sure we know people are getting the message.

Clark Howells – The Reservoirs are an important resource for the citizens of Baltimore and the region. Raise awareness about the impacts to these systems and foster a sense of ownership among the citizen of Baltimore.

Bill Stack – Use good standards as benchmarks for sustainability and know what is needed. Foster an understanding of what government needs to do and what citizens need to do.

Laurie Schwartz – Education key. Citizen play important role in sustainability. Locate finance for new campaign “Don’t make excuses, make a difference”

Phil Lee – Understand what you are trying to sustain. Make citizens understand what a watershed is (key concept).

Sujay Kauchal – Protect small streams critical. Push for regulations.

Inez Robb – Communication!

**MEETING ADJOURNS**